



General Information on Doing Business in Germany



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International Time

Germany is located in the same time zone as the rest of continental Western Europe, i.e. its time is one hour in advance of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Summer time (two hours in advance of GMT) is in force from the end of March (in 2010: 28 March) to the end of October (in 2010: 31 October).

Climate

Germany is situated in the moderately cool west wind zone between the Atlantic Ocean and the continental climate in the east. The climate is temperate. Sharp changes in temperature are rare. Climate data for Bremen:

Month	Maximum Temperature*)	Minimum Temperature*)	Humidity*)	Rainy Days*)	Sun Hours*)
January	3°C / 37.4°F	-2°C / 28.4°F	86 %	16 d	1 h
February	4°C / 39.2°F	-2°C / 28.4°F	84 %	14 d	2 h
March	8°C / 46.4°F	1°C / 33.8°F	78 %	12 d	4 h
April	13°C / 55.4°F	3°C / 37.4°F	72 %	15 d	5 h
May	18°C / 64.4°F	7°C / 44.6°F	70 %	12 d	7 h
June	21°C / 69.8°F	11°C / 51.8°F	72 %	14 d	7 h
July	22°C / 71.6°F	12°C / 53.6°F	75 %	16 d	6 h
August	22°C / 71.6°F	12°C / 53.6°F	78 %	14 d	6 h
September	19°C / 66.2°F	9°C / 48.2°F	80 %	14 d	5 h
October	14°C / 57.2°F	6°C / 42.8°F	83 %	15 d	3 h
November	8°C / 46.4°F	3°C / 37.4°F	87 %	17 d	2 h
December	5°C / 41.0°F	0°C / 32.0°F	87 %	15 d	1 h

*) on average

Business Hours

For commercial offices, the working day is eight hours, typically from 8 am to 5 pm incl. one hour lunch break. Many German companies have flexible working hours, i.e. employees start working between 7 and 9 am and leave the office between 4 and 6 pm.

Opening hours of banks differ and depend on the location. In larger cities, most banks are open as follows: Monday to Wednesday from 9.30 am to 5 pm, Thursday from 9.30 to 6 and Friday from 9.30 to 2. Cash machines are widespread throughout the country.

The Bremen Shop Closing Act (*Bremisches Ladenschlussgesetz*) provides that shops may be open round the clock from Monday to Saturday. As a rule, supermarkets are open from Monday to Saturday from 7 or 8 am to 8 or 9 pm, shopping malls and department stores usually from Monday to Saturday from 9.30 to 8 or 9.

On Sundays and public holidays, only shops at railway stations and airports are open as well as some pharmacies and shops at petrol stations on a reduced range of goods. Kiosks, bakeries and flower shops may be opened for three hours. All other shops are closed on Sundays and public holidays.

On 24 December (*Christmas Eve*) and on 31 December (*New Year's Eve*) – if these days fall on weekdays - shops have to close at 2 pm at the latest.



Public Holidays 2010

1 January	New Year's Day	entire Germany
6 January	Epiphany	only in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Saxony-Anhalt
2 April	Good Friday	entire Germany
5 April	Easter Monday	entire Germany
1 May	Labor Day	entire Germany
13 May	Ascension Day	entire Germany
24 May	Whit Monday	entire Germany
3 June	Corpus Christi	only in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony and Thuringia
15 August	Assumption Day	only in Bavaria and Saarland
3 October	Day of German Unity	entire Germany
31 October	Reformation Day	only in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-West Pomeranian, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia
1 November	All Saints Day	only in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland
17 November	Repentance Day	only in Saxony
24 December	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>entire Germany</i>
25 December	Christmas Day	entire Germany
26 December	2nd Christmas Day	entire Germany
31 December	<i>New Year's Eve</i>	<i>entire Germany</i>

15 February Carnival Monday ('Rosenmontag'):
In the Rhineland area, carnival processions take place and most offices are closed.

Language Skills

The official language is German, additionally numerous dialects are spoken throughout the country. English is the dominant foreign language and is definitely understood and spoken fluently by business people with international interests. Please be aware that correspondence of public authorities and relevant institutions as well as contracts, service agreements and bills are generally issued in German only.

Dates and Numbers

Dates are written in the order of day, month, year. The 1st of March 2010 is usually written 01.03.2010. When writing numbers, points denote the thousands and the comma is used to denote the decimal place.

Weights and Measures

All German measurements conform to the metric system. There are no unusual measures or terminology, except for certain archaic terms still found in agriculture.



Currency

The EURO is the single currency of currently 16 European Union countries, namely Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. EURO banknotes and coins have been in circulation since 1 January 2002 and are now a part of daily life for 330 million Europeans living in the EURO area.

EURO coins (1 € = 100 cents) exist in eight different denominations: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents, 1 € and 2 €. There are seven different EURO banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 €.

Entry Requirements

The Schengen visa entitles the holder to visits of up to 90 days every six months in the entire Schengen area and to travel throughout the 25 Schengen Visa Member Countries, comprising 22 European Union (EU) Member States, 2 European Economic Area (EEA) Member States, and Switzerland.

The Schengen countries are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland (EEA), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway (EEA), Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

For further information please visit

www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/WillkommeninD/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/uebersicht.html

Greetings

On first meeting somebody you intend to spend more than just a couple of minutes with you usually shake hands. It is also customary to shake hands with an acquaintance after not having seen her/him for a fairly long time. The hand shaking initiative is generally left to the one who holds a higher position (position wins out over age and gender). Academic titles should always be mentioned.

Tipping

Generally it is the rule that in a restaurant about 10 % of the bill's total are left as a tip if you were satisfied with the service you received. If you weren't satisfied, you can simply not leave a tip without being frowned upon by others.

Characteristics

In the mind of many non-Germans there are persistent beliefs as to what 'typical German' characteristics entail (hard working, perfectionists, humorless, know-it-alls, difficult to get to know). Our suggestion: be cautious about relying on the exactness of these stereotypes. You will almost always come into contact with a German who embodies the exact opposite. However, you can usually go on the assumption that a German exactly means what he/she says. In Germany, individuals expect each other to adhere to promises. Those who do not keep their word jeopardize their trustworthiness.



Smoking Ban

The Bremen Act on Non-Smoker Protection (*Bremisches Nichtraucherchutzgesetz*) provides that smoking is banned in all public buildings (e.g. hospitals, schools, universities, theaters) and all forms of public transport as well as in restaurants, hotels and discotheques. Restaurants may maintain a separate smokers' room. Until further notice smoking is permitted in local one-room bars with an area of less than 75 sqm provided they are clearly marked as '*Raucherlokal*', do not offer food and are off-limits for minors.

Moreover, the Health and Safety at Work Act (*Arbeitsstättenverordnung*) provides that employers have to take necessary measures in order to protect non-smoking employees from health damages through passive smoking.

Bremen Low Emission Zone

The low emission zone rules apply to the extended downtown Bremen area which is clearly marked by traffic signs (www.umweltzone.bremen.de). Anyone wishing to enter the Bremen low emission zone by car must have a low emission sticker (yellow or green) as of 1 January 2010. Overnight guests who have written confirmation of a reservation are exempted from the low emission zone rules. Several parking garages and the Bürgerweide parking area remain accessible for parking.

Travelling with German Rail

If you are travelling less than 500 kilometers (310 miles) within Europe, train travel usually offers time advantages in comparison to air travel. All German big cities are connected to each other within several hours' train ride and you will always arrive directly in the city center. This saves you the time of travelling from airports that lie outside of the main center to the city's center.

- ICE (InterCityExpress) trains are the most modern in the German train system and connect large metropolitan areas at speeds of up to 300 km/h (186 miles/h).
- IC/EC (InterCity and EuroCity) trains connect the city centers within Germany and with those of neighbouring countries within hours. Speeds reach up to 200 km/h (124 miles/h).
- RE (RegionalExpress): This is the standard German train that stops at most train stations along its way and offers economical, standard travel prices.
- RB (RegionalBahn): This is the slowest type of train in Germany. It stops at all train stations along its way.
- SE (StadtExpress) trains connect the centers of Germany's big cities quickly and at frequent intervals with the city's surrounding areas.

For additional or specific information, please visit DB Bahn at www.bahn.com.

Disclaimer

Despite careful verification, the accuracy of the above information cannot be guaranteed.

